

2024 EU ELECTIONS FEMINIST TOOLKIT

FOR PES PARTIES & PES WOMEN ORGANISATIONS



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A MESSAGE FROM PES WOMEN PRESIDENT, ZITA GURMAI.

The 2024 European elections are fast upon us. Everything stands to change in these elections. In the last European mandate, we have seen a worrying trend in far-right success and a rise in anti-democratic campaigns that attack democracy, human rights and the rule of law. These attacks are fundamentally linked to an increase in backlash against gender equality and women's rights. Furthermore, these actors not only target gender equality and women's rights, but also undermine LGBTI rights, migrants, and other marginalised communities. Success for the far right in the upcoming European elections would be devastating for progress in these areas.

We cannot stand for any rollback or regression in the progress we have made for women in Europe. Our progressive family has always been at the forefront of gender equality and the champions of women's rights. We cannot take these rights for granted. We must safeguard gender equality and women's rights so they can never be revoked.

Now is the time for action. Our fight for human rights, for women's rights, starts with you. You can make a difference. We need to make a stand together and ensure every candidate list, every committee, every policy is one that upholds gender parity. Let us show voters in the European Union that every PES party member is committed to equality.

Furthermore, our mission does not end in June 2024 with the elections. Many of your parties have national and local elections in the upcoming year. Parity does not begin and end at the European level. By integrating gender perspectives at every level, we can really make a difference for every person in the EU.

I ask you to join PES Women and PES in our call for a Feminist Europe. We need every party behind our goal of a parity democracy for Europe: by ensuring your parties, your organisations, your internal policies and structures are gender mainstreamed and have parity; by ensuring your candidate lists are gender equal; by ensuring that your national elections follow suit. We must continue to be the voice for progress. Let's make a Feminist Europe together.

Thank you for joining us in our fight for equality,



Zita Gurmai
PES Women President

01

INTRODUCTION

The next European elections for the European Parliament will take place on 6-9 June 2024, only a few months away. As the party of feminism, we have a duty to champion gender equality in the EU and within our own political family. Achieving gender equality in our political parties is foundational in shaping gender equality in the political sphere. The European elections are a pivotal opportunity to ensure that our progressive parties are gender sensitive and that the next European mandate is a feminist one. Progressing gender equality and women's rights in the next European mandate starts now, with you and your candidates.

Gender equality is a core value in our political make-up as socialists and social democrats. Therefore, in anticipation of these elections, PES Women has created a short toolkit on gender parity and gender equality in the run-up to the elections and the upcoming European mandate. We hope that the actions suggested below will be of use for you as you create your candidate lists, prepare your election campaigns, and begin to think beyond the European elections.

Many of the actions that follow are directly related to the upcoming European elections and what your party can do to incorporate a gendered perspective throughout your preparations. Other actions suggested can be incorporated in your party's general activities or for national and local elections. No doubt that your party already uses some of these measures. Finally, there are many other actions beyond what is in this toolkit that can dismantle inequalities in politics and political organisations and institutions, this toolkit is your launching pad!

A Feminist Europe starts with a Feminist outlook.

#FeministEurope
#EuropeWeWant

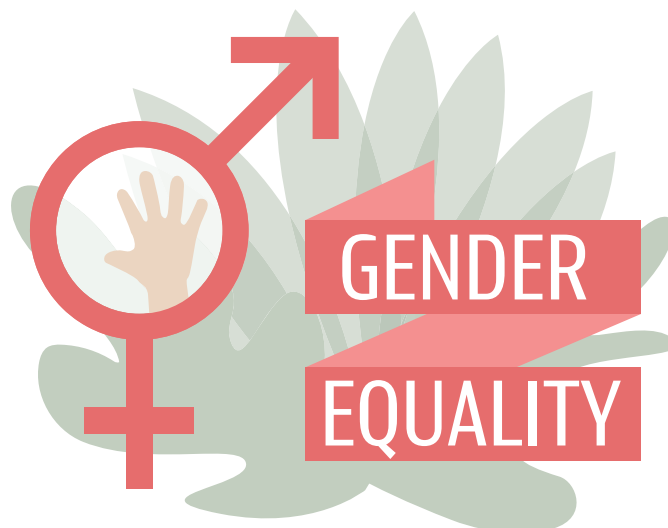
02

PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS AND DECISION-MAKING

Democracy and equality are core values of the European Union. Democracy is about fair representation and equality is about equal rights for all. In a democracy such as the European Union where all persons are afforded equal rights, women and men should be equally represented in decision-making roles. However, as it currently stands, this is not the case, neither at European nor Member State level.

Women make up half of our society and therefore should be equally represented in politics and decision-making at every level. However, women remain underrepresented in decision-making roles, including in politics. An essential perspective is lost when women are excluded from the political sphere which is harmful for everyone, not just women.

The European Union and its institutions are not abstract entities but are made up of people that make important decisions that affect every person living in the European Union. Although women make up over 51% of the population in the EU, women make up less than half of current MEPs in the European Parliament. Furthermore, there are stark differences per country when it comes to MEP make up; for example, Finland and Sweden have more women MEPs than men and Cyprus has only one women MEP.



Issues that affect both women and men are often decided by men alone without meaningful input or representation by women which can lead to deficiencies and bias in our democracy. Although progress in parity is happening (there are more women than ever before in governments and parliaments), inequalities and barriers to meaningful participation in politics prevails. The political sphere, especially high-level decision-making, has historically been a masculine environment, building on traditional patriarchal structures that exclude women and those deemed outside of the norm. Although these structures are now open to women's participation, visible and invisible barriers to real representation and inclusion exist; gender-based violence, hate speech, hate crime, financial insecurity, stigma, economic, burden of care, sexual harassment, to name but a few.

Gender equality is a vital aspect of democracy. Building a gender equal Europe with parity democracy is an ongoing process. The European elections in June 2024 are a vital step in this process. Participatory democracy is not achieved without parity at every decision-making level, from the EU elections to internal party structures. PES Women believe in parity democracies, where women are equally represented in politics.



WHAT CAN YOUR PARTY DO?

Carry out an **audit** of gender balance internally in your party. Examine and remove **barriers** to women's inclusion and representation, both **visible and invisible**, that may be present in your party structures, organisations, leadership, recruitment, campaigning, policy, and elections.

Reform your **party statutes** to include gender balance and parity. Parties can decide on internal targets and quotas, especially for leadership positions. Support **legally binding targets** in your country.

Head-hunt female candidates for elections (local, regional, national, presidential, European, internal etc.) and leadership positions.

Strengthen the role of women's structures within parties to amplify women's voices and influence.

Provide **adequate funding** for women's organisations within parties, events focusing on gender equality, educational trainings for women in politics.

Hold events that focus on gender equality issues. Incorporate gender perspectives in events on different policy areas.

Promote **gender equal representation in exchanges**, for example: gender equal panels and debates. Remember, having one token woman participating is not enough for gender parity. Additionally, ensure gender equal audience participation in **questions and answers** by using a zipped system when giving the floor to participants or the audience to ensure balance.

Invest in **compulsory trainings and mentoring** programs for all genders to become aware to the reality which women in politics face and how to implement inclusive leadership.

Involving men in matters of gender equality is important because gender equality is not a “women’s matter” but is a central element of our political agenda as socialists and social democrats. Traditional patriarchal structures that uphold inequality also detrimentally affect men. Fostering male involvement in gender equality activities is beneficial to your party and its members.

Create mechanisms for party members to report experiences of inequality, discrimination, or harassment from internal and external actors.

03

WOMEN IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY

Women are not a homogenous group: women in all their diversity should be represented in decision-making roles. For PES Women, parity does not mean token inclusion and reaching targets; representation means women from all backgrounds exercising influence and having their voices heard without barriers to participation. PES Women recognise that an intersectional perspective is key when engaging in gender equality and women's rights. Women are diverse in their backgrounds and experiences; intersectionality is key when addressing the needs of women and people who experience multiple interlocking systems of oppression, such as race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability, age etc. Parity democracy must be meaningful in its inclusion of women in all their diversity.



WHAT CAN YOUR PARTY DO?

Support women candidates from all backgrounds; reach-out to and headhunt women from all background.

Examine barriers, both visible and invisible, that may be present in your party structures, organisations, leadership, recruitment, campaigning, policy and elections.

Provide training, mentoring, funding and other **support for women candidates**, particularly young women and women from under-represented minority groups.

Encourage participation of young women in politics through mentorship programmes, educational campaigns, and engagement with party youth wings.

Women's participation is notably low at local and regional level. Start supporting women's representation at these levels now which feed into national and European elections down the line. Start **empowering initiatives** to promote women to run in local and regional politics in close cooperation with PES Committee of the Regions and PES Local.

Adopt an **intersectional** approach to party policy and actions.

29.5% of the total female population in the EU have a disability. Ensure that party lists, campaigns, events and actions are **adapted** to enable participation and candidature for people of all abilities.

04

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND HATE SPEECH TOWARDS WOMEN IN POLITICS

Gender-based violence and violence against women is one of the greatest threats to achieving gender equality. Women in politics are particularly vulnerable to different forms of violence that are grounded in gendered aspects.¹ Physical or psychological, social or economic, sexual or stereotypical, online or offline - violence against politicians can manifest in many different forms, often with the objective of discouraging women from participating in the public sphere and politics.

Hate speech is one of the many forms of violence against women that prevents women from exercising their rights and living in an equal society, particularly those who live and work in the public sphere. Hate speech is a serious barrier to women's freedom of expression and safety. Hate speech, and the lack of consequences for the proliferation of hate speech, leads to the chilling effect of silencing women. Gender-based hate speech, hate crime, and violence are a real barrier to the inclusion and participation of women in the political sphere.



¹ <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC136860>

Men in politics also face hate speech and violence, however, hate speech directed at women in politics often takes place on the basis of gender as well as taking the form of sexist and sexual threats, harassment, and gender-based violence. Moreover, certain groups of women in politics that experience intersecting forms of oppression are more exposed to these attacks, such as young women, LGBTI persons, and women in minority groups. Additionally, activists and defenders of women’s rights, human rights, and LGBTI rights are attacked disproportionately.

Hate speech, harassment, and violence directed at women in politics remains “part

of the job”.² This is the reality for many women working in politics or trying to enter the political sphere. Over 80% of MPs from 39 countries have experienced some form of psychological violence and over 65% received sexist and sexual remarks.³ More than 40% of these women received threats of physical violence.⁴

Not only are women underrepresented in politics, but those who do enter are subjected to verbal and physical violence. This violence perpetuates and exacerbates existing inequalities and gender stereotypes in politics. There is a risk that without real change, women will be deterred entirely from politics.



²UN Women’s Expert Group Meeting, “Data and violence against women in politics”, 4–5 December 2019

³Inter-Parliamentary Union, ‘Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians’, 2016

⁴Inter-Parliamentary Union, ‘Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians’, 2016

WHAT CAN YOUR PARTY DO?

Promote a political **culture of zero tolerance towards sexism and misogyny** in your party and in the wider public sphere.

Speak out against gender inequalities that women candidates face during election campaigns.

Foster a culture of belief by taking any case of harassment, violence, or hate speech towards women candidates seriously. Implement internal mechanisms for reporting and discipline.

Create a support network for female politicians in your party.

Offer **mentorship programmes** between new and potential candidates and previous candidates / position holders to foster dialogue on experiences and create support networks for women in politics.

Introduce **mandatory trainings** for election candidates, both men and women, on the potential violence and hate speech directed at female candidates and candidates from minority or marginalised communities.

Monitor cases of hate speech and violence and integrate it into election monitoring in your parties. Promote the establishment of independent complaint points or external committees in your member state which can receive and process harassment cases.

Raise awareness within and outside of your party on how the **media** can proliferate hate speech against women in the public eye. Appeal to media platforms to engage with women candidates in a meaningful manner.

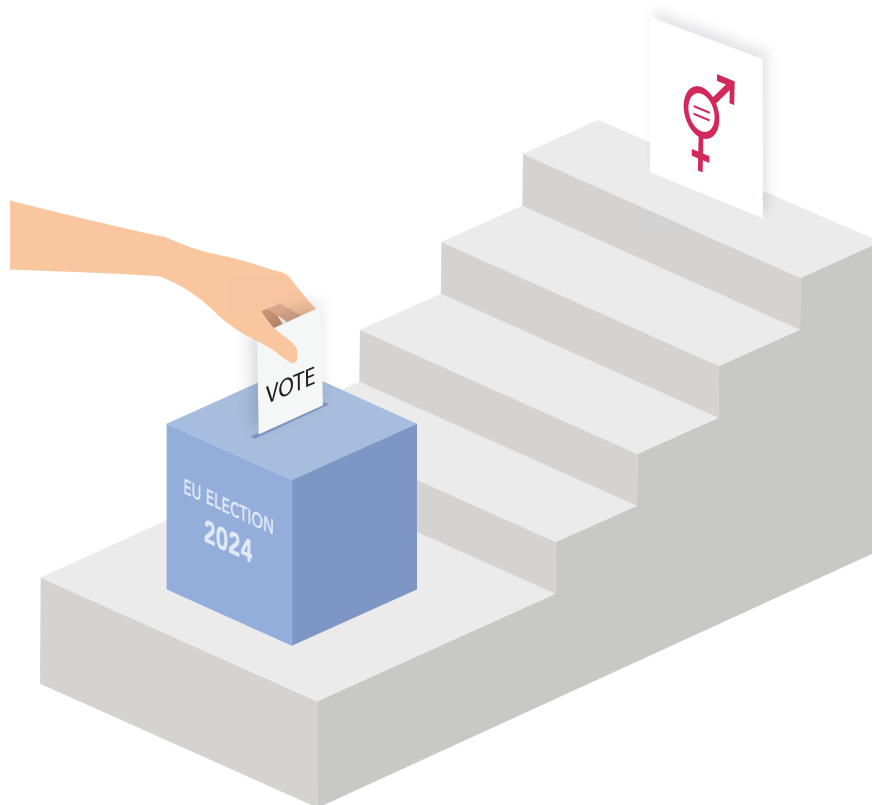
Provide **trainings on sexual harassment prevention** for all party members and elections candidates.

05

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS FOR PES MEMBER PARTIES

Political parties have great influence over representation in politics through recruiting, nominating and electing female candidates; disseminating information on elections and politics; rejecting and challenging inequality publicly. Change starts within our parties. Socialists and Social Democrats have been consistently leading the way in gender equality and women's rights. Without parity in our own parties, we lose credibility as leaders on these issues.

The European elections in June 2024 are significant for political parties across EU Member States. These elections are also a foundational step in progressing gender equality and women's rights in the upcoming mandate, affecting EU and Member State policy and legislation for the next five years and beyond. The potential in safeguarding gender equality starts now, with your party and your candidates.



WHAT CAN YOUR PARTY DO?

Introduce candidate list **quotas with placement mandates**.

Ensure candidate lists are gender balanced by employing **50:50 or zipped lists** (... one woman, one man, one woman, one man ...)

Place women at the **head of candidate lists**. Head-hunt women candidates for leadership positions.

Hold trainings on campaigning for women candidates to close the cyclical gap in lack of representation and shared knowledge.

Create **gender sensitive political programs** in the run-up to the elections. Ensure every campaign event, action, and policy is gender-mainstreamed and gender equal.

Connect new female candidates with current and past women MEPs to support the exchange of best practices and knowledge.

Promote women's participation in these elections as voters; women make up half of the electorate, yet more men than women vote in European elections.

Target and lobby local, national and European media outlets to cover female candidates and politicians in a meaningful manner. Challenge unfair or discriminatory coverages, i.e. reference to appearance or stereotyping.

Higher media visibility can help to get more women elected. Promote women candidates through traditional media mediums and social media platforms.

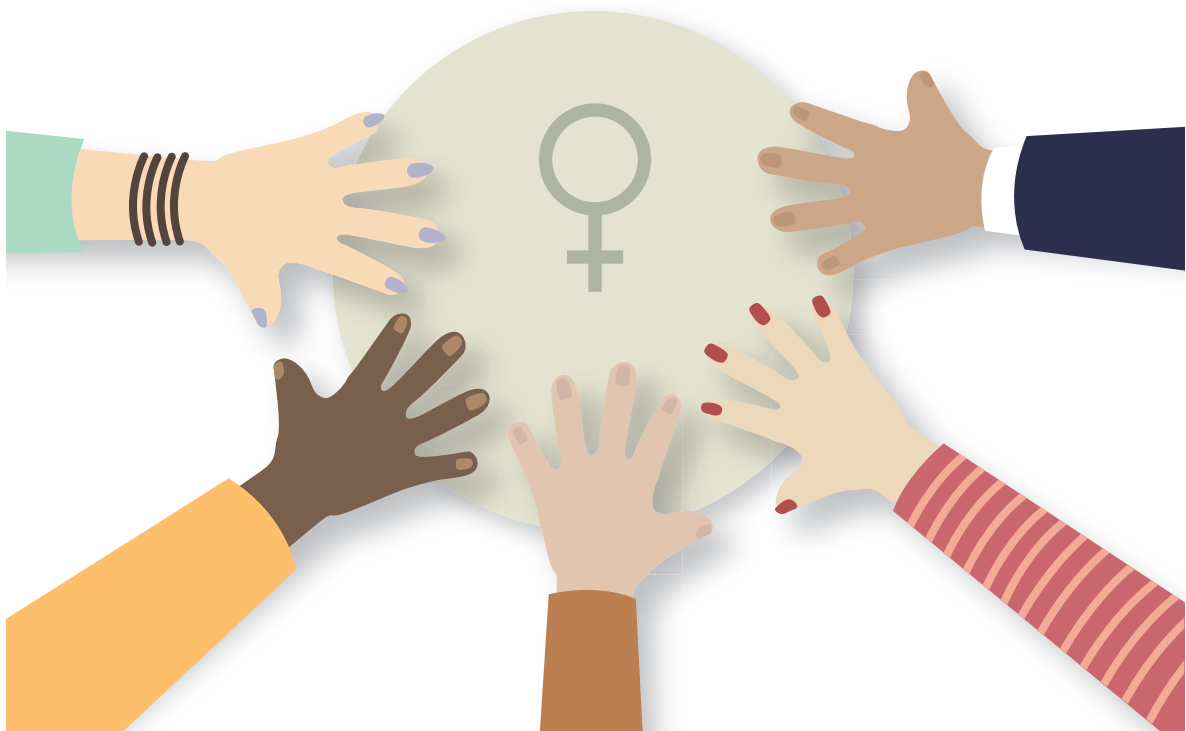
Inform the PES Women Secretariat (with adequate notice) if your candidates take part in important events so we can promote progressive female candidates.

Inform the PES Women Secretariat (with adequate notice) of events your party organises, takes part in, or supports that cover gender equality issues.

PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN POLITICS AFTER JUNE 2024

Gender parity does not stop once the European elections in June are over. In the new mandate, there are many ways that your party can promote gender equality for MEPs within the European Parliament.

Legislation and policy for the EU and its Member States are shaped by MEPs and their teams. Ensuring gender parity and gender equality allows MEPs to carry out their duties without fear of discrimination or harassment, as well as safeguarding gender equality across policy areas in the EU.



WHAT CAN YOUR PARTY DO?

Appoint female MEPs as **head of delegations** to the European Parliament and apply zipped replacements if needed.

There may be circumstances in which MEPs step down from their role, in that case parties should apply **zipped replacements** for the role as well as in committee and portfolio placement.

Apply gender parity to **committee portfolios taken on by women** to avoid **horizontal segregation**. Furthermore, ensure equal distribution of meaningful portfolios (soft policy vs hard policy).

Organise **mandatory trainings** for MEPs and staff on **gender mainstreaming**. For example, the S&D Group in the EU Parliament organised a **gender-sensitive training** for MEPs in the previous mandate. This could be repeated and refreshed throughout the five-year mandate to ensure MEPs are up-to-date on evolving practices and information.

Organise **mandatory trainings** for MEPs and staff on **sexual violence and harassment**, as well as other forms of violence directed at women in politics. This could be repeated and refreshed throughout the five-year mandate to ensure MEPs are up-to-date on evolving practices and information.

Push for **reform to EU Electoral law** to include provisions for **parental leave** for MEPs. MEPs currently cannot take leave due to rules dictating no substitution for plenary voting.

Employ a **code of conduct** on gender equality in your party for the upcoming mandate and future elections (see below PES CoR Code of Conduct in '**Useful Resources**').

07

CONCLUSION

The European elections 2024 are fast approaching. No doubt your party or organisation has already implemented some of the suggested actions in this toolkit in your preparations. It is our hope that this toolkit will give you some inspiration to add a gender perspective in your activities leading up to the elections and after.

Bringing a gendered lens to the European elections is vital to ensure a Feminist Europe. Every action counts towards gender parity and equality. We hope that we can count on your party and organisations to join us in our endeavour to create a gender equal election process and parity democracy in Europe.

If you have any questions or are planning any events in the run up to the elections, please do not hesitate to contact the PES Women team at pes.women@pes.eu.

We wish you a successful 2024 election period!

The PES Women Team





08

USEFUL RESOURCES

- PES Women
<https://women.pes.eu/>
- PES Women Paper: Parity Democracy for Europe
<https://pes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Parity-democracy-for-Europe-PES-Women-position-paper-1.pdf>
- PES
<https://pes.eu/>
- PES EU Elections 2024 Manifesto
https://pes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2024_PES_Manifesto_EN.pdf
- PES Malaga Resolution
https://pes.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Resolution_EN_final.pdf
- PES Equality Policy
<https://pes.eu/policy/equality/>
- The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats: Gender Equality & Women's Rights
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/content/gender-equality-and-womens-rights>
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/position-papers/sd-groups-position-paper-gender-equality-and-womens-rights>
- FEPS Gender Equality Publications
<https://fepe-europe.eu/theme/gender-equality/>
- PES Group European Committee of the Regions
<https://pes.cor.europa.eu/>
- PES Group European Committee of the Regions Code of Conduct for Gender Equality
https://pes.cor.europa.eu/sites/default/files/article_further_reading/Code-of-conduct-pes-gender-REV_EN_0.pdf

- Young European Socialists
<https://youngsocialists.eu/>
- European Elections 2024
<https://elections.europa.eu/en/>
- European Commission: Gender Equality Strategy
https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en
- European Legislative Train
<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/>
- European Union
https://european-union.europa.eu/index_en
- European Institute for Gender Equality
<https://eige.europa.eu/>
- PES Women Newsletter Archive
<https://us18.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=a2a76f31bb75d9b4d75ad-ceec&id=d04d987b84>
- OECD Toolkit for Mainstreaming and Implementing Gender Equality
<https://www.oecd.org/publications/toolkit-for-mainstreaming-and-implementing-gender-equality-2023-3ddef555-en.htm>
- EIGE Toolkit for Gender-sensitive Parliaments
https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-sensitive-parliaments?language_content_entity=en
- EIGE Toolkit for Gender Equality Training
<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-equality-training/who-guide>
- S&D Proposal for an EU Charter of Women's Rights
<https://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/publications/eu-charter-womens-rights>
- Rainbow Rose
<https://www.rainbowrose.eu/>



-  <https://women.pes.eu/>
-  twitter.com/PES_Women
-  facebook.com/PES.Women
-  instagram.com/pes_women